

A FEW



PRACTICAL HINTS

— TO THE —

Officers, N. C. Officers & Men

— OF THE —

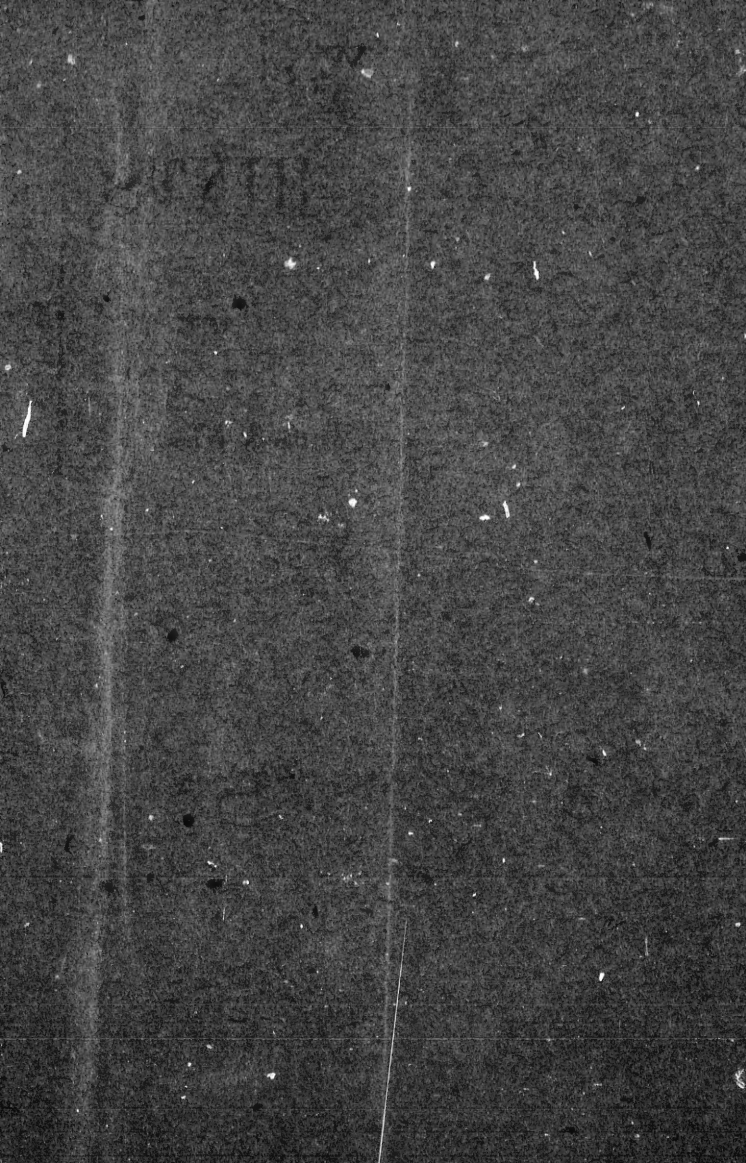
26TH BATTALION

Relative to their Duties in Camp.

LONDON, ONT.:

FREE PRESS PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO., RICHMOND-ST.

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WITH THESE HINTS AND REMARKS ON THE

(17)

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A FEW PRACTICAL HINTS

—TO THE—

Officers, Non-Com. Officers and Men
of the 26th Battalion.

As the time allotted to the performance of our annual drill in camp, and the amount of work to be done whilst there, are so greatly out of proportion, I think it well to utilize every moment of it by offering a few suggestive hints, and placing them in the hands of each member of the Battalion, so that no excuse can be tendered by even a recruit for the neglect of any of those little things which go to make up the sum of a "soldier's life," and the observance of which contribute so much to the health, comfort and appearance of any body of men who are promiscuously brought together under canvas.

I think I am safe in saying that a very large proportion of the discomfort experienced on service is attributable to a kind of "let it take care of itself" abandonment, which is entirely unworthy of our "Canadian Yeomanry," and quite unlike their characteristic forethought. It seems to arise from the idea, that as the country furnishes them for the time being with money, food, and clothing, they are justified in

laying aside their identity as citizens, and grasping, in an undefined sort of way, at what they suppose to be the pleasures of a "soldier's life." Depend upon it, no greater mistake can be made. Our undertaking on behalf of the country is no myth, but involves the grave responsibility of preparing for war in the time of peace, just as the forethought of the farmer prompts him to prepare for winter by harvesting his crop in summer, or the merchant prepares to meet his bills at maturity by pushing his sales when he finds a customer. Any motive short of this is a fraud, and a cheat, and will fail to find a response from the public whom we serve. We must, therefore, engage earnestly in acquiring a knowledge of these self-imposed duties, and labor with the same devotion, that we do in our ordinary business.

It is evident, of late years, that there is a lack of public sympathy towards us. This is partly owing to an over-anxiety to muster with full ranks, and, as a consequence, some improper persons have sometimes enrolled, whose after conduct has reflected badly on the splendid material of which this Battalion is composed. The introduction of these is not now a necessity, as the peace footing to which the force is reduced relieves officers from the necessity of receiving any other than the cream of our population.

1st.—Recruiting.

All ranks should contribute in every possible way to recruiting a good companionable class of men, so that when they meet under the same canvas, and at the same mess, the very best social understanding

will prevail, and great care should be taken in telling off "squad," so to divide the men that they may assist and enjoy each other in the best manner.

2nd.—Cleanliness.

Nowhere is cleanliness more positively required than with us. To secure this an ample supply of water is indispensable. At least a dozen pails should be served out to each company, and, if possible, a few barrels of water should be constantly ready. Also, soap and towels in abundance. The feet should be washed at least once a day, and changes of linen, and especially of socks, should be amongst the comforts provided; for it is manifest that no man has a right to make others uncomfortable by neglecting his personal cleanliness.

3rd.—Tents.

At a very small cost, mattresses can be made, each large enough to accommodate two men: these filled with straw make a comfortable bed at night, and, when rolled up, make a good seat in the daytime. A supply of these will last for years, and will be found a great saving of labor, and add to the comfort of the men and the appearance of the tents.

4th.—Sleeping.

Under no circumstances should men be allowed to sleep in their clothes; it is not only a filthy and unsightly habit, but it is so destructive to clothing, that it is questionable whether it is not injured more by being used in that way than by the ordinary wear. It would be better for those who fear the cold to bring an extra blanket from home. The clothing

should be taken off at night, and nicely rolled up and used as a pillow.

5th.—Cooking.

By all means refuse as cooks men who are slovenly in their habits. These very often accept this position to escape the more onerous duties of camp, and to save the trouble of cleaning themselves, and, as a consequence, the cooking is badly done; their comrades are sent to the hospital, and the rations are denounced as bad, when the fault lies in the lack of attention to this little matter of "interior economy."

6th.—Saluting and Mutual Recognition.

I wish to draw the attention of both officers and men to the necessity of mutual recognition, by saluting each other when passing. There is nothing abject about it as some suppose; it is simply a courtesy which one gentleman extends to another. It is easily learned, and when offered in an amicable manner, produces a wholesome effect on service, and is sure to be kindly remembered afterwards.

7th.—Discipline.

Whatever may be the social condition of the various ranks in private life, yet, for obvious reasons, a distinction must be observed on duty. The adage that "familiarity begets contempt," cannot be better exemplified than in a military force, where no distinctive lines are drawn, for such a body of men to be "hail good fellows, well met," one moment, and the next, by mutual consent, to separate themselves into their several relations, implies a perfectness more

than human, and is therefore impossible; so whilst we meet in a "camp of instruction," let us commence properly by observing "discipline" from the first.

Personal Appearance Under Arms.

Not having the professional soldier to serve us as "models" from whom to copy, as regards the "setting up" on parade, a few words on this point may not be inappropriate.

1st. Every part of the person, clothing, arms and accoutrements, must be clean — belts pipe-clayed, brasses shining, and boots polished—before every parade. It is not enough that this be done once or twice during camp, but it must be continuous. The hair must be cut short, nicely combed and brushed. The forage cap, before camp, must be blocked and set up, and instead of being put on like an ordinary cap, it must be poised slightly to the right side, the strap is to reach the point of the chin, and the numeral exactly in front of the forehead. Then, when the hair is nicely brushed back, the effect is good, and pleases the eye.

2nd. The clothing must be carefully fitted. Too little attention is often paid to this most important point. To take grease off any part use a little of the spirits of ammonia, and to preserve the color of the scarlet, a little lemon juice. To whiten cord and trimming use a little chalk.

3rd. The habit of wearing narrow-soled, high-heeled shoes, under the idea that it looks well and is fashionable, is so absurd, that a moment's reflection will dispel it. The foot is one of the most delicate

and wonderful organisms of the body; it is this that gives elasticity and grace to the whole deportment, and yet, is it not true that many of our men, after being on the parade ground an hour, walk more like foundered horses than like those who have the free use of their feet. They have lost the vivacious pleasure of the drill because their feet have "given out;" every step is accompanied with pain, and all this because they will not wear a suitable shoe. Be advised: wear a black leather shoe with a low heel and a sole as broad as the bottom of the foot, and there will be no more complaining in camp or out of it.

Dress.

Be very careful about your personal appearance. If one man can keep himself neat and presentable, every other man can do the same. Never leave camp without your waist-belt on, and your tunic buttoned up; never lounge about with your hands in your pockets, or your forage cap slouched on your head. When strangers are in camp endeavor to show them every courtesy, and avoid making any remarks concerning them which will cause them any uneasiness. Recollect that you are the conservators of the law, both civil and social, and that your acts as such should not be liable to be misinterpreted; therefore, try by every act to secure their respect and confidence.

Necessaries.

You will require at least the following articles of necessities: Changes of shirt and socks, a supply of towels, needles and thread, knife and fork, plate and spoon, soap, clothes brush, hair brush and comb,

blackening brushes and blacking, brass ball and brass brush, button stick, razor and looking-glass.

Belts.

If you wear the linen cross-belt, which I hope to be permitted to introduce, wear the small pouch on the waist belt, directly at the back ; the bayonet in rear of the left thigh ; the belt above the buttons behind and between the two lower buttons in front, and tight enough to keep its place.

Knapsack.

The knapsack, when worn, must not hang down the middle of the back, but strapped tight ; the top of it to be in line with the seam of the collar.

Cleaning Rifles.

Except after firing blank cartridge, never allow water or vegetable oil to touch your rifles. Sponge them out carefully with a woollen rag, and when the barrel is bright inside, and clean outside, keep it dry. After firing blank cartridge you will have to use a little water in this way: Place the muzzle on the ground ; hold the small with the left hand, and after opening the breech, pour in very carefully, say, two tablespoonsful of water ; sponge out, as before, with several rags, till the inside is thoroughly dry, clean and bright ; then use only animal oil. Goose or hen's oil is good if you cannot get Rangoon.

Guards.

An efficient and active guard gives tone and standing to a whole battalion. It is continually under the scrutiny of the brigade staff, and the various field

officers of other regiments, and therefore no pains should be spared to enable it to make a good impression. After making the tent look as comfortable as possible in any way that suggests itself, observe the following rules, which are extracted from the Field Exercise and Orders for the Militia :—

The Commander will see that the sentries are properly instructed in their duties, and that they move about in a brisk soldierly manner; keep them alert, both by day and night, frequently visiting them during that time; see that on the approach of an officer entitled to compliments the guard is turned out in time to receive him, without hurry or confusion.

Compliments.

Pay the following compliments :—“Turn out” and present arms at all times, whether by night or day, to the Deputy Adjutant-General commanding the camp, or any other general officer in uniform; also to “Grand Rounds.” To the officer commanding your own Battalion, “turn-out” and present arms once a day; after which “turn-out” with shouldered arms only. To the field officers of your battalion “turn-out” with shouldered arms once a day. “Turn-out” on the approach of an armed party, and if it is commanded by an officer “present arms,” and if not shoulder only. Sentries, however, will “present arms” to all armed parties. “Turn-out” and inspect your guard at reveille, retreat, and tattoo. After retreat pay no compliment except as above. A sentry will always acknowledge an officer, when passing, thus: When at about fifteen paces distant halt, front and “shoulder arms;” in the case of a field officer, “present arms;” to unarmed parties he will “shoulder,”

and if commanded by a field officer he will "present." Parties with side arms are to be considered as armed parties.

Paying Compliments with Arms.

When you pass or address an officer, do so at the "shoulder," with the left hand brought across the body, and the hand, fingers extended, meeting the sling of the rifle in line with the right elbow.

Compliments Without Arms.

When about to address an officer, salute and halt at two paces distant, and remain at attention till you are dismissed. Do not remove the cap.

If passing an officer on the left, salute with the right hand; if on the right, with the left hand; thus, bring the hand, with a circular motion, to the head, palm to the front, the point of the forefinger one inch above the eye, thumb close to the forefinger, elbow in line and nearly square with the shoulder; at the same time slightly turn the head towards the person saluted.

When several men salute together, take the time from the one next the saluting point.

When you are carrying a parcel salute by coming to "attention," and the same if you have no cap on.

When you are off duty, and meet a body of troops commanded by an officer, halt, front, and salute the officer, and colors, if any.

Parade.

The culminating point of all our efforts is the parade ground. It is here that the spirit of emula-

tion, which should exist between one company and another, is best indicated, and the administrative powers of the several officers seen. A degree of "dash" and "self-reliance," is indispensable ; it is calculated to inspire a love of the profession and to win the confidence of all. If this "air" is observed by the officers and non-com. officers, it will impart itself to the men, and there will soon be no need of anything like coercion to get up a clean, steady, well-toned and efficient battalion. Every one must study his own duty, and there must be no delay or hesitancy in forming the parade. This will prevent talking in the ranks, it will secure the attention of the men, shorten the drill, and give zest and relish to the whole work.

Musketry.

The rifle is placed in your hands for the destruction of your enemy, and upon the efficient use thereof depends, in a great measure, your own safety and that of your comrades. You must regard it as a finely adjusted instrument or weapon, whose powers are perfect and unfailing, and you must be willing to attribute any difference in the uniform results to your own want of skill in the using, rather than to any defect in the rifle. You are also taught that the effectiveness of an army does not depend so much on numbers as in thorough discipline, and a well directed "fire ;" therefore, if you are inattentive at our annual camps of instruction, and neglect to learn your duty, as a natural result you will be nervous and unsteady, if on any sudden emergency you are brought into action. Remember that "Knowledge is power," and instead of being a tower of strength to those around you, you will only occupy valuable ground, and

perhaps by your conduct contribute to defeat. These considerations, both from a military and moral point of view, should prompt you to the attainment of a practical knowledge of musketry, the first great essential of which is to preserve the rifle perfect. All its parts must be thoroughly clean, as in case of the interior of the barrel becoming rusty the increased resistance to the passage of the bullet will prevent its full expansion, impair its rotation, and probably cause it to strip, or the plug to be driven through the bullet. Be careful never to run the muzzle into the ground when loaded. Keep your ammunition well packed in the pouch, and in the package, till you are about to use it. Be careful not to expose your rifle to accident, whereby the barrel may become bent or dented ; this is generally the result of carelessness, as, for instance, " piling arms," and allowing the pile to fall ; placing them in wagons on the march, and allowing accidents to occur to them there ; carrying weights, particularly at the muzzle, where the barrel is thinnest—any injury done to the barrel at the point renders it irreparably useless, this being the point of delivery ; riding it as a seat when standing easy ; washing the rifle with water and allowing it to get in between the stock and barrel, or into the lock or several springs, thus inducing rust where it is not readily detected ; in short, use the rifle in the way, and for the purpose for which it is intended. The next great step in the attainment of good shooting, is a knowledge of the Manual and Firing Exercise. When these are well learned the rifle is as easily used as the hand, arm or foot, and it looks and feels like a part of yourself. You can scarcely take too much interest in these exercises, as you can practice them at any time.

We now come to the "finale," which involves a knowledge of the high powers of the rifle as a weapon and the means at our disposal for attaining the most perfect results from it. This is a study which does not come within the design of this address, but arrangements will be made to secure you a short course of theoretical instruction in musketry, during the coming camp, before you go to the butts.

Remarks.

I have now taken a salient view of some of the most noticeable defects in the administration and detail of our annual duties. I have done so because my long experience has convinced me that our "young men" do wish to acquire "military knowledge." I have observed their satisfaction, when they have mastered any particular duty, and their disappointment when, from any cause, they have failed successfully to compete with their comrades, or their own want of skill or opportunity has been the means of placing them in the background. I am also satisfied that more is expected of us during the few days of our annual assembly than can possibly be effected, but when we take into account the number of recruits who present themselves every year for training, and compare the progress that they make with that which is expected from the same number in the regular army, who have the advantage of being taught by professional instructors, I think we have a right to feel proud of our attainments in the face of our difficulties.

It is with these feelings that I have thought well to direct early attention to our forthcoming duties. I recommend a return to our early system of evening

drill by companies. This will afford opportunity for thorough organization before going on service, and will very materially lessen the preliminary drill in camp.

P. H. ATTWOOD,

Lieut.-Colonel, Commanding 26th Batt.

Head Quarters,
London, July 14, 1875. }

